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Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East

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Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Contents

Page

III. Replies received from Governments 2

Canada 2

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Canada

1. In response to the request of the Department of Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat for relevant information and views on General Assembly resolution 59/63, Canada is pleased to provide the following information, based on our report to the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Canada supported resolution 59/63, which called for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Canada has called in the United Nations for full adherence and compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons by States parties in the region and has urged the four States Parties to the Treaty in the region (Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Oman) that have not signed or ratified comprehensive safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as required by the Treaty, to do so as soon as possible. Canada actively supported the adoption of a resolution on the application of safeguards in the Middle East by the IAEA General Conference in September 2004. Canada has appealed to all States in the region to contribute further to regional stability and security by concluding additional protocols to their respective safeguards agreements, thereby demonstrating greater openness and transparency. Canada fully supports efforts by IAEA to convene, as soon a possible, a forum on the application of safeguards, in which countries from the Middle East and other interested parties could learn from the experience of other regions about comprehensive verification arrangements and other confidence-building measures that could contribute to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

2. Canada shares the serious international concern about the scope and nature of the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran. While Canada recognizes that the Islamic Republic of Iran has a right to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, the Islamic Republic of Iran has failed to provide any plausible justification for its efforts to acquire the full nuclear fuel cycle. In a speech to the Conference on Disarmament, delivered on 14 March 2005, the Foreign Minister of Canada reaffirmed that the extensive past undeclared nuclear activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, together with its efforts to acquire the full nuclear fuel cycle, have resulted in strong suspicions that it has nuclear weapons ambitions. He said that permanent cessation of the uranium enrichment and other proliferation-sensitive activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, is the only acceptable objective guarantee of the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. On 22 February 2005, the Prime Minister of Canada said to a summit of leaders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization that the Islamic Republic of Iran must be encouraged to end its nuclear weapons programme. He expressed Canada's hope that the challenge could be addressed through dialogue and diplomacy, but emphasized that the international community must be prepared to stand behind its words with stronger measures, if necessary. The extensive past undeclared nuclear activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which raise important questions about its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, were clearly not in conformance with its safeguards obligations, a matter that Canada believes IAEA should acknowledge and report to the Security Council as required by the Agency's statute. Canada has also encouraged the Islamic Republic of Iran to ratify promptly the Additional Protocol and has actively supported IAEA safeguards activities in the Islamic

Republic of Iran. Canada views with concern the recent decision by the Islamic Republic of Iran to resume uranium conversion activities, in defiance of the November 2004 Suspension Agreement and relevant IAEA Board resolutions. The Foreign Minister of Canada indicated on 11 August 2005 that if those issues could not be satisfactorily resolved by IAEA, Canada believes the Agency must refer the matter to the Security Council.

3. Canada was deeply concerned by the revelation in late 2003 of the nuclear weapons programme of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and other undeclared nuclear activities. Canada strongly supported the decision of the Government of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to end all nuclear weapons-related activities and the efforts of IAEA to verify that important decision. That resoluteness to disarm in a transparent, irreversible and verifiable manner, together with the commitment of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to accept enhanced inspections via the Additional Protocol and to respect fully all its disarmament obligations, were important steps reinforcing regional and international security.

4. When explaining its support for resolution 59/106 on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, Canada urged Israel, in the crucial months leading up to the 2005 Review Conference, to take the necessary first steps to adhering to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon State. This statement is in conformity with the Canadian Government's 1999 disarmament and non-proliferation policy statement, which called upon Israel to accede to the Treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon State, to separate its civilian and military fuel cycles and to place its civilian nuclear activities under IAEA safeguards. The statement also conforms with Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which calls on all States to promote the universal adoption and full implementation of multilateral treaties whose aim is to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.